

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 10985 161541Z

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TAGS:

SUBJECT: PENDING EGYPTIAN REQUEST FOR U.S. NAVY HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY
SERVICES IN GULF OF SUEZ AND MEDITERRANEAN APPROACHES
TO SUEZ CANAL (U)

DEPT ALSO PASS AID

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS TO ALERT ADDRESSEES TO A PENDING
EGYPTIAN REQUEST FOR U.S. NAVY HYDROGRAPHIC SERVICES IN THE GULF
OF SUEZ AND IN THE MEDITERRANEAN APPROACHES TO THE SUEZ CANAL.

2. DURING HIS JULY 1976 VISIT TO THE U.S., VADM ZIKRY, COMMANDER
IN CHIEF, EGYPTIAN NAVY, MENTIONED TO CAPT BLOCK, ALUSNA CAIRO,
THAT HE WANTED TO REQUEST THE SERVICES TO THE U.S. NAVY TO PERFORM
HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY WORK IN THE GULF OF SUEZ. THE WORK, HE SAID,
WAS NEEDED IN CONNECTION WITH PASSAGE OF DEEP DRAFT TANKERS TO AND
FROM THE SOUTHERN TERMINUS OF THE SUMED PIPELINE. ALUSNA ADVISED
THAT SUCH A REQUEST SHOULD PROPERLY BE SUBMITTED THROUGH THE
AMERICAN EMBASSY IN CAIRO. VADM ZIKRY STATED THAT HE WOULD FOLLOW
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CAIRO 10985 161541Z

THIS PROCEDURE AND THAT HE DID NOT IN FACT THEN HAVE SUFFICIENT

INFORMATION ON HAND TO FULLY DESCRIBE THE DESIRED TASK.

3. ON 12 AUGUST, ALUSNA CALLED ON VADM ZIKRY AT NAVAL HQ ALEXANDRIA AND AMONG OTHER THINGS DISCUSSED THIS PROJECT. ZIKRY SAID THAT GOE HAD BEEN INTERESTED FOR SOME MONTHS IN HAVING HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY WORK DONE NOT ONLY IN CONNECTION WITH THE SUMED PIPELINE, BUT ALSO TO SUPPORT THE PASSAGE OF DEEP DRAFT TANKERS THROUGH A DEEPENED AND WIDENED SUEZ CANAL. HE DESCRIBED A SERIES OF MEMOS WHICH HAS BEEN CIRCULATED THROUGH THE EGYPTIAN BUREAUCRACY FOR SOME MONTHS ON THE SUBJECT. FIRST, ZIKRY SAID, THE EGYPTIAN NAVY HAD BEEN ASKED IF IT COULD ACCOMPLISH THE TASK, AND HAD TO REPLY THAT IT COULD NOT. LATER, THE BRITISH WERE APPROACHED ON THE SUBJECT BUT THE DISCUSSIONS WERE SUSPENDED WHEN UK REPRESENTATIVES INDICATED A DESIRE TO DISCUSS FUNDING FOR THE VENTURE. AFTER FURTHER DISCUSSION WITHIN THE GOE, IT WAS DECIDED THAT THE EGYPTIAN NAVY SHOULD APPROACH THE U.S. NAVY, AND IT WAS AT THAT POINT, SAID ZIKR, THAT HE HAD FIRST BROACHED THE SUBJECT TO ALUSNA.

4. VADM ZIKRY THEN STATED THAT HE STILL DID NOT HAVE A FORMAL REQUEST READY, BUT WOULD DESCRIBE THE PROJECT IN GENERAL TERMS. HE THEN CALLED FOR A SET OF XEROXED CHART REPRODUCTIONS AND WITH THESE AND ACCOMPANYING ARABIC TEXT, BRIEFED ALUSNA AS FOLLOWS:

A. THE INTENDED GOAL OF THE PROJECT IS TO ASSURE SAFE NAVIGATION FOR DEEP DRAFT TANKERS (I.E., TANKERS WITH LOADED DRAFTS ON THE ORDER OF FIFTY FEET) IN THE APPROACHES TO THE GULF OF SUEZ TERMINUS OF THE SUMED PIPELINE, AND ALSO TO AND FROM BOTH ENDS OF THE SUEZ CANAL.

B. PRELIMINARY EGYPTIAN ASSESSMENT IS THAT THERE ARE AT LEAST SIXTEEN OR SEVENTEEN SHALLOW SPOTS IN THE APPROACHES WHICH COULD POSE A NAVIGATIONAL HAZARD TO DEEP DRAFT SHIPS. THE SITUATION IS COMPLICATED BY THE EXISTENCE OF MANY OIL RIGS IN THE GULF OF SUEZ AND MORE SUCH RIGS ARE ANTICIPATED IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

C. SURVEY WORK IS NEEDED NOT ONLY IN THE GULF OF SUEZ BUT ALS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN APPROACHES TO THE NORTHERN TERMINUS OF THE SUEZ CANAL FROM PORT SAID NORTH TO A POINT WHERE THE DEPTH OF WATER WILL PERMIT ASSURED SAFE NAVIGATION. THERE MAY ALSO BE SHALLOW SPOTS IN THE RED SEA, BUT THESE, SAID ZIKRY-WERE NOT HIS RESPONSIBILITY (I.E., NOT AN EGYPTIAN RESPONSIBILITY).

D. THE EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE DELINIATED A PRELIMINARY CHANNEL IN THE GULF OF SUEZ AND MEDITERRANEAN IN WHICH HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CAIRO 10985 161541Z

IS NEEDED. THE CHANNEL IS ABOUT FIVE NAUTICAL MILES WIDE AT THE WIDEST POINT, CONSIDERABLY NARROWER IN MANY PLACES. IT PROVIDES FOR SEPARATION OF NORTHBOUND AND SOUTHBOUND TRAFFIC.

E. SOME WORK WILL BE REQUIRED IN CERTAIN OF THE SHALLOW SPOTS IN ORDER TO REMOVE OR MINIMIZE HAZARDS TO NAVIGATION. ZIKRY DID NOT STATE AN INTENT TO ASK THE U.S. NAVY TO UNDERTAKE THIS WORK.

F. ZIKRY DID NOT DIRECTLY ADDRESS THE QUESTION OF FUNDING. HE GAVE, HOWEVER, NO INDICATION THAT GOE WOULD OFFER TO REIMBURSE THE U.S.

FOR EXPENSES INCURRED, AND LEFT WITH ALUSNA THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT NO SUCH OFFER WILL BE MADE. WE BELIEVE THAT EGYPTIAN INTENT IS THAT THIS PROJECT IF UNDERTAKEN BE FUNDED IN THE SAME MANNER AS WERE EARLIER SUEZ CANAL CLEARANCE AND PORT SAID-DAMIETTA MINE-SWEEPING OPERATIONS.

5. ALUSNA HAD DISCUSSED THE MATTER IN SOME DETAIL WITH THE AMBASSADOR BEFORE THE 12 AUGUST MEETING WITH ZIKRY, AND ANSWERED ZIKRY AS FOLLOWS:

A. OBVIOUSLY, ALUSNA WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO MAKE ANY COMMITMENTS, BUT COULD ONLY RECEIVE WHATEVER REQUEST ZIKRY DESIRED TO MAKE. FURTHER, IN THE ABSENCE OF DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE DESIRED PROJECT, ALUSNA COULD OFFER NO ESTIMATE OF THE FEASIBILITY OF THE U.S. NAVY UNDERTAKING SUCH A PROJECT.

B. BEFORE PROCEEDING FURTHER, IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO RECEIVE A WRITTEN REQUEST (IN ENGLISH) GIVING THE PRECISE COORDINATES OF THE AREA IN WHICH HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY OPERATIONS ARE DESIRED AND A COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF THE TASK TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. THIS WILL ENABLE OUR EXPERTS IN THE U.S. TO MAKE A TECHNICAL DETERMINATION OF THE FEASIBILITY OF ACCOMPLISHING THE DESIRED PROJECT. ZIKRY AGREED TO FURNISH SAME AND INDICATED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT NO RESPONSE FROM THE U.S. IS POSSIBLE UNTIL THIS FORMAL SUBMISSION HAS BEEN RECEIVED.

C. THE PROPOSAL MIGHT WELL REQUIRE THAT A FORMAL DIPLOMATIC NOTE REQUEST BE SUBMITTED BY THE EGYPTIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA). THIS WOULD CERTAINLY BE THE CASE IF IT WERE INTENDED THAT THE U.S. BEAR THE EXPENSE OF THE PROJECT. ALUSNA NOTED THAT USG HAS BUDGETED NO FUNDS FOR SUCH AN ENDEAVOR. SHOULD USG BE PREPARED TO UNDERTAKE PROJECT, POSSIBILITY OF AID FUNDING WOULD HAVE TO BE EXPLORED, BUT COULD NOT BE ASSURED. THIS WOULD CERTAINLY REQUIRE THE PARTICIPATION OF AID AND OTHER AUTHORITIES ON THE U.S. SIDE, AS WELL AS THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND MFA (POSSIBLY OTHERS) ON THE EGYPTIAN SIDE. ZIKRY INDICATED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 CAIRO 10985 161541Z

AND ASKED IF IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE NOW FOR MAF TO SUBMIT A DIPLOMATIC NOTE TO THE AMERICAN EMBASSY. ALUSNA SUGGESTED THAT NO NOTE BE SUBMITTED FOR THE TIME BEING PENDING U.S. NAVY DETERMINATION OF FEASIBILITY.

6. AS NOTED IN PARA 1 ABOVE, THE PURPOSES OF THIS MESSAGE IS TO ALERT ADDRESSEES TO THE PENDING REQUEST. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS NO ACTION BE INITIATED ON THIS SUBJECT PENDING RECEIPT FROM THE EGYPTIAN NAVY OF THE WRITTEN REQUEST DESCRIBED IN PARA 5B ABOVE. THE PROJECT COULD BE WORTHWHILE AND THE OVERALL GOAL APPEARS CONSISTENT WITH THAT OF EARLIER USN OPERATIONS WHICH MADE POSSIBLE THE REOPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL. DETERMINATIONS AS TO FEASIBILITY, DESIRABILITY, COST EFFECTIVENESS, AND OTHER FACTORS CAN BE MADE ONLY UPON RECEIPT OF THE WRITTEN REQUEST. FULL DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED WHEN THE REQUEST IS IN HAND. ON THE BASIS OF CUSTOMARY

EGYPTIAN BUREAUCRATIC DELAYS, THIS MAY BE SOME WEEKS IN THE FUTURE.
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